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ABSTRACT

Opinion polls indicate that public confidence in educational leadership is declining, probably because the educational establishment is not delivering what people want. One demand is that education be made relevant to the world of work--an area in which vocational educators are in a strong position. The second demand is that education be made relevant to the achievement of the good life. This apparent dilemma can be resolved by integrating the educational enterprise and bringing together the three domains of practical arts liberal arts, and fine arts. For this we must develop a fully integrated educational experience, one which will require the integrated effort of all our educational resources and which will cause far reaching changes in our educational methods. The resistance which vocational educators are still showing toward this necessary integration is based on unsound reasons, chiefly the fear of becoming lost in the larger picture. If vocational educators could perceive themselves, and be perceived, as being in full partnership in an enlarged view of the educational enterprise, they could break out of their present subordinate role. They should not be resisting the integration of education; they should be leading it. (SA)

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Marvin J. Feldman

Remarks to: Technical Education Division
American Vocational Association
Atlanta
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I want to confess to you at the beginning that I speak with a forked tongue about vocational education. I keep two sets of books. When I talk to groups of general educators, or to politicians, or to businessmen, I am an unashamed unreconstructed partisan of vocational education.

But when I speak to groups like this one, -- when I feel I am in the family -- when I am sure what I say will not be used against vocational education, I use a different script. For while I am proud beyond expression that I am first of all a vocational educator, I feel that we -- as vocational educators -- are all less in need of self-congratulation for what we have accomplished than we are in need of a vivid awareness of our short-comings.

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Were I less wholly committed to vocational education, I would -- believe me -- feel much less free to focus on our faults and failures.

Let me first provide a little context.

We are standing together on the edge of a new era in vocational education. This year, for the first time in history, more than half the American work force will work in jobs for which educators prepared them. Till now, the majority of America's workers have been trained on the job. Education has been, in a sense, secondary and supplementary. Now we, as educators, have the primary responsibility.

But, at the very time our responsibilities have reached a new high, the public's confidence in our ability to exercise this vast responsibility has reached a new low.

Late last year, the Harris organization released some updated measures of the people's confidence in the

leadership of America's institutions. The results were hair-raising. As recently as 1966, 61% of the people expressed "a great deal of confidence" in education's leadership. Since then, that figure has fallen to an alarming 33%. And it is still falling.

The reasons for this headlong erosion of confidence seem clear enough on the surface. People want something from the educational establishment that we are not now delivering.

The message is clear. If education is to regain the confidence of the people, it must produce results that make sense to the people.

I believe that the public wants two things -- one very consciously, the other more sub-consciously.

The public's conscious demand is a demand that education be made relevant to the world of work. What vocational educators have known for years -- that America

is miseducating at least half its young people -- has, at last, become an article of the conventional wisdom.

On this count alone, vocational educators are in a stronger position than we have ever been before. Our intention has been from the beginning to prepare people realistically for the world of work. And, I believe, we are delivering that intention with increasing skill and accuracy.

But the public's sub-conscious demand is another matter altogether. It is a demand that education be made more relevant to the achievement of the good life.

Let me tell you what I mean.

An elemental new reality is being thrust upon America's educators. Masses of people are beginning to see life's larger possibilities and a need to pursue them.

This has never happened before. It is a new option. We have lived through an era in which most people

spent their lives either working or resting from work.

Now most people are aspiring to examine and experience a range of life's possibilities that has before been an option open to no more than a tiny handful.

We are entering an era not only of mass affluence, but of a mass appetite for participation in culture and creativity. Man's search for meaning is becoming a universal search. Man's need to create is becoming a universal need. Man's desire to reshape society is becoming a universal desire.

We are all familiar with the phenomenon of rising expectations. But now we face something quite different, an era of expectations of a new, higher order.

It reaches into every aspect of life. To work only to make a living is now a "sellout." Jobs must be intellectually rewarding and socially valuable.

Members of families are beginning to see themselves as having much larger emotional responsibilities to each other.

As mobility speeds us up, we are beginning to demand that every human encounter have meaning.

As science has conquered outer space, we are all beginning to feel a new impatience to explore our inner lives.

Some have said that the work ethic is disappearing. That, I think, is superficial and grossly misleading. Our society is working harder than any in history. What is happening is something quite different. We are not asking that work be made pleasant; we are asking that it be made meaningful. We are not asking that work be made less demanding; we are asking that it be made more demanding -- that jobs be redesigned so that more -- not less -- of our human capacities can be utilized.

This sub-conscious ambition -- the demand that education prepare all young people for a larger, fuller life -- seems at first to contradict the first. It seems to demand a radical extension of what we call liberal arts education at the very time when the demand for work-relevant education has reached a new high.

There seems to me to be only one way to resolve this apparent dilemma. We need now to integrate the educational enterprise.

We have historically divided the arts to which we educate people into three separate domains:

the practical arts,

the liberal arts,

the fine arts.

These three domains must now be integrated. To do so, we must see their inter-relationships much more clearly than we have ever seen them before. And we must bring them

together in all our institutions.

All the arts -- not just the so-called liberal arts -- are, in their way, liberating. All of them free us from enslaving limitations. All of them enlarge us, only in different ways.

The practical arts are the arts of function. Their mastery provides independence from degrading toil. They free us from the anxiety of insecurity.

The liberal arts are the arts of meaning. Their mastery provides a sense of purpose, of relationship, of order. They free us from the anxiety of alienation. They help us know the full range of human possibilities. They guide our restless efforts to perfect our institutions.

The fine arts are the arts of transcendence. Their mastery provides a sense of depth, of mystery and majesty. They remind us that we can create more than we can comprehend. They free us from the anxiety of limitation.

We have educated large numbers of people in the practical arts. But the liberal arts and the fine arts have been reserved for a few. Now that must change. The education of isolated specialized elites is a thing of the past. A new mass aristocracy is demanding preparation for participation in the larger human experience, and we must provide it.

The days when vocational educators could teach a young man a skill and enough geography so he could find his way to work are gone forever.

Vocational education has always been education for participation. We have taken people whose ability to participate in the world of work was minimal, and enlarged that ability by teaching practical skills.

We have taught our students, incidentally, a measure of awareness of the liberal arts, and a measure of appreciation for the fine arts. But awareness and

appreciation are passive and non-participatory. And that is no longer good enough.

People are now yearning to participate in the whole of the human enterprise, not just a part of it.

They yearn to participate in the search for meaning. They yearn to participate in the process of perfecting our institutions.

They yearn to participate in the extension of our culture.

And to do so, they will need to master all the arts of man. They are asking, I think, for a fully integrated educational experience.

For more than two years, this policy of integration has been the principal theme of our national educational policy.

Sidney Marland when he was Commissioner of Education, made an eloquent appeal for integration.

He proposed that we re-order our whole educational effort around a new concept which he chose to call "career education."

Marland said:

"Education's most serious failing is its self-induced voluntary fragmentation. The strong tendency of education's several parts to separate from one another, to divide the enterprise against itself...

"I propose that the universal goal of American education, starting now, be this: that every young person completing our school program at grade 12 be ready to enter higher education or to enter useful and rewarding employment...

"The fundamental concept of career education is that all educational experiences -- curriculum,

instruction, and counseling -- should be geared to preparation for economic independence, personal fulfillment, and an appreciation for the dignity of work..."

I am in full agreement with Marland's proposal as I understand it.

I believe that our present compartmentalized system should be promptly converted into a fully integrated system of career education. And I believe this ambition deserves our full and sustained support.

Marland's appeal has, I think, been widely misconstrued, and thus its far-reaching nature has been misunderstood. "Career education" is not simply a new name for what we now call "vocational education." It does not mean that our concept of vocational education should be somewhat enlarged and the enlarged concept called

"career education." I am not suggesting that new programs in something called "career education" are to be developed at the cost of vocational education.

I am suggesting something much different and much more fundamental.

I am suggesting that the old distinctions which have crippled our educational effort should be laid aside forever and a new unity of purpose be expressed by a new universal term: "career education."

Right now we have a bewildering variety of designations within the educational system, but the principal ones are these:

-college preparatory education

-vocational education

-general education.

I believe that these terms have come to suggest choices which need not be made, distinctions which have no meaning, divisions in what is really indivisible, and conflicts where none need exist.

Our thought and our practice about education should at last be integrated. And I agree with Marland that the result of this integration should be called "career education."

I am not appealing for "separate but equal" attention to vocational education in the overall system. I believe rather that career education is a universal necessity and requires the integrated effort of all our educational resources.

In one sense, career education is simply an overdue affirmation of the need for purposeful, relevant education. But its implementation will require far-reaching changes in what we teach, how we teach, and how we organize to teach.

We should all be glad to leave behind these tired distinctions and their ruinous consequences. They belong only to the past.

And this brings me -- at last -- to the thought I want primarily to leave with you today.

I see signs everywhere that vocational educators are either actively or passively resisting this necessary integration. And I think we are resisting it for unsound reasons.

In other contexts, people don't resist integration because they have a sure, solid sense of identity, but because they lack one. They are afraid they will be overwhelmed, swallowed up, lost in the larger picture.

I believe many vocational educators are shrinking from our present opportunity for just such reasons.

I think all of us need a sharper, more positive sense of identity.

Some of us in vocational education have complained for years that the world sees us as a subordinate second to liberal education. I certainly have.

Some of us have been lamenting for years that we are perceived by the public as running third-rate remedial factories for academically disabled young people. I certainly have.

Some of us wallow in the knowledge that we are maligned and misunderstood. I certainly do.

But lately I have been thinking that perhaps we have invited these demeaning characterizations because we ourselves have a limited vision of vocational education. I think we have misunderstood ourselves. Vocational education has a soggy sense of identity and is desperately in need of consciousness raising.

We in vocational education need our own liberation movement, and the first step is to liberate ourselves from

a limiting definition of what we are and what we can do.

If a person thinks in his heart that he is second rate, he is trapped by that definition, as surely as if he were shackled. He will be second rate. He cannot go beyond it.

I see signs that vocational education is on the brink of an historic identity crisis. Things vocational educators have said for years are suddenly becoming the new universals.

The famous Carnegie Commission on Higher Education said in its next-to-final report:

> "Post secondary education puts too much pressure on too many young people to attend college whether they want to or not. It offers them too few alternative options. It is thus biased too much toward academic subjects alone."

Such a statement from such a body would have been unthinkable ten years ago.

We are at last being invited to join as full if not favored partners in an enlarged view of the educational enterprise. But we cannot become a part of this necessary integration if we still see ourselves involved in a kind of win/lose struggle with our academically oriented colleagues.

We must now abandon our partisanship. We are no longer involved in a battle for money and prestige with the bad guys -- the liberal arts advocates and the general educationists.

But I see strong signs of silent separatism. Many of us are closet segregationists. I see vocational educators succumbing to the same kind of snobbishness we have so successfully criticized in our academic antagonists.

We can stop being fearful. We can stop feeling self-conscious. We can stop feeling inferior. We can stop feeling defensive. We can stop feeling threatened.

The civil war between educational specialists is over. The need now is for a new unification.

We have a great and growing role to play in modern society. But we are not responding fully. We have accepted the submissive, subordinate role so long we have grown comfortable in it. We have been riding in the back of the bus so long we have grown comfortable there. We have become the Uncle Toms of the educational establishment. The world has at last taken a different view of us. Now we must take a different view of ourselves.

We should not be resisting the integration of education; we should be leading it.

Thank you very much.